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Note to Readers

The guidance in this issue is still applicable and useful in classifying positions in the Federal government. However, there may be references to names and addresses of organizations within the U.S. Office of Personnel Management that have changed, names of individuals no longer employed at the Office of Personnel Management, or documents such as the Federal Personnel Manual that no longer exist.

For the December 1997 HRCD-4 release, the Office of Classification Appeals and Fair Labor Standards Act Programs made minor, nonsubstantive edits to Digest issues 1 through 19. For example, acronyms and abbreviations were spelled out in many places, references to law and regulation were expanded, typographical errors were corrected, leading zeros were added to 3-digit series numbers, outdated prefaces have been deleted, and the issuance date were added to the header of each page. Because of the change from the original paper version to an electronic format, the page numbers in Digest issues 1 through 19 and other references, such as the General Schedule classification standards and Federal Wage System job grading standards, now available electronically may have changed. In issues 1 through 19, where there is a reference to a page, we either eliminated the page reference or updated the page number with the page number of the electronic version. Beginning with issue 20, pages references are to the electronic version only. Please note that pages numbers may change when a file is printed depending on the format and printer used.

The Office of Classification Appeals and Fair Labor Standards Act Programs is responsible for the content of the Digest. We be reached by telephone at 202-606-2990, by fax at 202-606-2663, or by email at ADOMSOE@OPM.GOV.

Digest issues are also available on the Office of Personnel Management's website and electronic bulletin board. The website address is <http://www.opm.gov> and the electronic bulletin board is OPM ONLINE. Using a modem, dial OPM ONLINE at 202-606-4800. Long distance telephone charges may apply.

Standard: Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide,
Part I

Factor: Factor IV, Element 3: Physical Dispersion

Issue: Assigning credit to a second-line supervisory
position

Identification of the Classification Issue

This issue arose in an Office of Personnel Management region's consideration of a position classification appeal. The Chief of the Police Division at a military installation served as a second-line supervisor over three seven-member squads plus a smaller fill-in-squad within a Police Branch. Each squad was headed by a Supervisory Police Officer who was under the direct supervision of the Division Chief. These squad supervisors were assigned to the same duty post as the Division Chief; the police officers were assigned to various patrol areas throughout the installation. The Division Chief's duty hours coincided with the major portion of the first shift five days a week, a small portion of the second shift, and none of the third. In accordance with guidance in Factor IV, Element 3, the subordinate squad supervisory positions were each credited with two points for "physical dispersion." The issue was whether the Division Chief position, as a second-line supervisor, should also receive such credit.

Resolution

Credit can be given for physical dispersion when a substantial portion of the work force for which the supervisor is responsible is regularly assigned to one or more locations which are physically removed from the location of the main unit under conditions which make day-to-day supervision difficult to administer.

The area protected by the police officers included about 7400 acres, 300 buildings, 40 miles of streets and roads, and 26 miles of perimeter. Five patrol areas were established at the installation, to each of which a police officer was assigned for each shift. The Chief of the Police Division had overall responsibility for the physical security of these areas. However, as a second-line supervisor, the physical dispersion of the police officers did not impact on his day-to-day supervisory responsibilities since the squad supervisors were responsible for assigning personnel to each area, making periodic rounds, and assuring that the police officers carry out their assigned duties. Further, as Factor IV, Element 3, specifies that, for purposes of this element, employees whose daily duties require the making of certain rounds shall not be considered "physically separated" from the supervisor, the squad supervisors could not be counted for physical dispersion.

When evaluating second-line supervisory positions, care must be exercised to determine whether the physical dispersion of indirectly supervised subordinates has any impact on the position being reviewed. Credit should not be given automatically to a second-line supervisor's position, but only when that position is responsible for assigning employees to work at remote locations and ensuring the work is accomplished effectively and efficiently, so as to make the day-to-day supervisory responsibilities difficult to administer.

Standard: Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide,
Part II

Factor: Factor I-Base level of work supervised

Issue: Administrative supervision GS-0460

This article was deleted in August 1994 because of the issuance of the General Schedule Supervisory Guide (TS-123, dated April 1993), which superseded the Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide, issued in January 1976 (TS-23) and the Draft Grade Evaluation Guide for White Collar Supervisors, issued in 1991.

Standard: Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide,
Parts I and II

Factor: Factor I-Base level of work supervised

Issue: Determining extraordinary independence or
freedom from supervision of a subordinate
position covered by a Factor Evaluation
System standard

Identification of the Classification Issue

This issue arose in an Office of Personnel Management region's consideration of a position classification appeal. The appeal involved a position covered by Part II of the Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide. Part I has a similar provision for which the resolution would also be applicable. The appellant supervised both GS-11 and GS-12 employees. The Office of Personnel Management classification standard covering the work supervised was in Factor Evaluation System format. The GS-12 employees met all other requirements of the "base level" definition; however, the agency had determined that they failed to meet criteria (c), i.e., the grade must not be based on a degree of extraordinary independence or freedom from supervision. The agency had pointed out that the GS-12 positions were credited with Level 2-4 of Factor 2, Supervisory Controls, and Level 3-4 of Factor 3, Guidelines. These two were the only factors that were rated differently from the evaluation of the GS-11 positions which were rated at Levels 2-3 and 3-3. The agency concluded that the GS-12 positions could not be considered as the base level of work supervised.

The issue was whether or not the crediting of a higher level on Factor 2, Supervisory Controls, constituted evidence of a degree of extraordinary independence or freedom from supervision.

Resolution

Factor level 2-4 provides for positive supervisory involvement in work initiation and planning, interim oversight activities, and review of completed work. While limited in some respects, it is an appropriate and normal level of supervision for an employee at the GS-12 level.

Factor Level 2-5 provides for administrative direction with assignments in terms of broadly defined missions or functions. The employee is responsible for planning, designing, and carrying out work independently, and results are considered technically authoritative and are normally accepted without significant change. Consequently, Level 2-5 does represent an extraordinary independence or freedom from supervision. Thus, where Level 2-5 is the grade-determining factor for a position, that position would not normally be creditable toward determining the base level of work supervised.

Under the factor system, the grade of a position is dependent on all nine factors. Therefore, unless the difference between Factor Levels 2-4 and 2-5 actually causes a difference in grade level there can be no determination that the grade of the position is based on extraordinary independence or freedom from supervision.

In the subject appeal case, as the GS-12 positions were credited at Level 2-4 rather than Level 2-5, there was no possibility of exclusion of them from base level credit. Accordingly, the supervisory position was certified to a higher grade.

Standard: Nurse Series, GS-0610 (June 1977)

Factor: Title determination

Issue: Clinical Nurse vs. Nurse Specialist

Identification of the Classification Issue

This issue arose in an Office of Personnel Management region's processing of a classification appeal. The appellants, whose positions were classified as Clinical Nurse, GS-0610-9, claimed that their work in a labor and delivery section of a general medical hospital, providing the full range of services to obstetrical patients, constituted a specialty at a level consistent with Benchmark GS-0610-11-2 for Nurse Specialist.

Resolution

The title, Nurse Specialist, is intended for positions with requirements for advanced levels of competence to facilitate performance of certain highly specialized functions on a regular and recurring basis in addition to traditional direct nursing care. The cited benchmark provides examples of the nurse specialist concept by including regular and recurring responsibility for new or unusual treatment programs and serving as a role model and teacher in those areas for experienced and fully trained nurses. While most fully competent nurses may provide training and assistance to new or lower level staff, the role model concept is intended to recognize the nurse whose knowledge, skills, and leadership ability clearly exceed that of a group of fully competent professional nurses. It is not intended by the standard that most or all of the nurses in a unit could be recognized as role models.

Due to the high volume of activity at this hospital, a number of unusual cases were handled in the labor and delivery section. However, such cases were exceptions to the preponderant workload for each nurse and did not require the appellants to develop nursing techniques or administer treatment programs "unusual" to the section.

The Office of Personnel Management recognized that in situations where a nurse position is established primarily to deal with cases requiring new, experimental, or unusual treatment approaches, the position should be titled Nurse Specialist and credited accordingly for grading purposes. However, in this appeal, the appellants' positions were correctly titled Clinical Nurse because their *primary* purpose was to provide more standardized nursing care in a clinical setting.

Standard: Job Grading Standard for Inspectors
(April 1982)

Factor: N/A

Issue: Proper standard to apply for evaluation of
preventive maintenance inspection work

Identification of the Classification Issue

This issue arose in an Office of Personnel Management region's consideration of a job grading appeal. The appellant requested that his job be upgraded, citing the job grading standard for Inspectors as the basis for his request. The appellant was responsible for preventive maintenance inspections of equipment that did not require a knowledge of specific trade practices. The appellant followed a preventive maintenance inspection schedule that stated the maintenance to be done. He was responsible for checking for and recognizing defects by means of visual examinations and operational tests. Repairs that required an application of electrical, air conditioning, plumbing, or pipefitting skills were referred to the appropriate trade shop; the appellant was himself responsible for making routine repairs and doing routine maintenance such as drilling holes; replacing wheels, casters, brackets, and blades; cleaning and lubricating parts; and tightening nuts and bolts.

Resolution

The Job Grading Standard for Inspectors is "used to grade nonsupervisory jobs that involve examining services, materials, and products that are processed, manufactured, or repaired by workers performing trade or craft work to determine that the physical and operating characteristics are within acceptable standards, specifications, or contractual requirements." Excluded from coverage of the standard are "nondestructive testing. . .and other examining work that does not require a comprehensive [i.e., journeyman or "full performance level"] knowledge of the trade or craft work process involved in making or repairing the items." Accordingly, the purpose of the work graded by use of the Inspector standard is to determine whether other trade and craft workers have made items, repaired items, or have performed services that meet established standards and specifications. The summary of the appellant's job, however, indicated that he did not examine items to determine that trade or craft workers had made the items to meet acceptable standards or specifications, and his work did not require a comprehensive or full performance level of knowledge of any trade or craft work process. When the appellant identified a repair that he could not make, he described the defect in a work order that was sent to the appropriate trade shop but did not identify the standard not met nor the work and materials needed to correct the defect.

As there was no specific series that covered the appellant's job, a standard had to be found that could be applied to determine the grade.

In such a situation, the grade must be determined by comparison with standards for the most nearly related occupations. It was found that the Mobile Equipment Servicer, WG-5806, job grading standard was most nearly related to the appellant's job. Although automotive and mobile equipment explicitly covered by that job grading standard are different from the hospital and general building equipment that the appellant serviced, the maintenance and repair work were quite similar. In both cases, the work involved checking fluid levels, lubricating moving parts, performing minor repairs, and referring major work to other workers. While the equipment was dissimilar, the servicing and repair tasks were similar, and the grade of the job was determined by use of an ostensibly unrelated standard.